

California Electric and Magnetic Fields Program

N E W S L E T T E R

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES UPDATE

May/June 2001

Postponement of Science Advisory Panel's May 7 Meeting and Risk Evaluation Release

On the afternoon of Friday, May 4, 2001, Mr. Paul Clanon, Director of the California Public Utilities Commission Energy Division, faxed a letter to Diana Bonta', Director of the California Department of Health Services, asking that the Department postpone the May 7th Science Advisory Panel meeting "until after the Department has had an opportunity to brief the PUC staff on the Risk Evaluation." The EMF program was instructed to cancel the meeting and to delay the release of the public comment drafts of the Risk Evaluation and the Policy Options documents. The Program has notified the CPUC of its availability to provide such a briefing, but as of this writing on June 11th, the PUC has not yet scheduled a briefing. Several stakeholders have filed Public Record Requests for these documents, but the DHS legal department has determined that the document is still in the deliberative phase and thus not subject to the Public Records Act. On June 1, the program received a letter from the law firm of Gray, Cary, Ware and Friedenrich on behalf of Citizens Concerned about EMFs, the Fund for the Environment and the California First Amendment Coalition asking once more for the documents. This, along with a Public Records Act Request from the Wall Street Journal, has been submitted to the Department's legal office.

Leeka Kheifets to Join World Health Organization

Leeka Kheifets, a core member of the EMF Program's Stakeholders Advisory Consultants (SAC) group representing the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), is leaving EPRI to become head of the World Health Organization's Radiation Program. In her new position, she will continue her involvement with power-frequency EMF issues while also working on other frequencies of non-ionizing and ionizing radiation. Leeka intends to continue her involvement with the California EMF Program, although her future role with the Stakeholders Advisory Consultants is yet to be determined.

Important Program News:

The Power Grid/Land Use Policy Analysis is now complete.

The Education Unit will no longer be taking public questions.

**We have a new web site address:
www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/deodc/ehib/emf**

World Health Organization Workshop: “Precautionary Policies and Health Protection: Principles and Applications”

On May 28 and 29, 2001, Raymond Neutra chaired a World Health Organization (WHO) workshop in Rome on the “Precautionary Principle.” He participated as an individual, and not as an official representative of the California Department of Health Services. The workshop’s 15 participants included six from the United States and seven from Europe. Jack Sahl, former chair of the California EMF Program’s Stakeholders Advisory Committee, also participated in the workshop. The application of the precautionary principle to the EMF issue was one of many topics discussed at this workshop.

Early in the workshop, it became clear that non-governmental organizations, European environmental agencies, industry stakeholders, decision analysts, and ethicists were using the words “precautionary” and “precautionary principle” to mean different things, and this made it difficult to communicate. All parties seemed to agree that there was a need for some kind of graduated approach to preventive action depending on the degree of confidence in a particular hazard. The participants discussed the different interpretations of the precautionary principle and its possible application to regulation, and agreed that further steps were needed before the concept can be applied to WHO’s risk assessment methods and health recommendations.

Workshop Discussion Topics

- From the perspective of European law, the word “principle” has legal and technical implications, but the various aspects of the “Precautionary Principle” described by the workshop participants would be considered procedural prescriptions by ethical theory. For example, the

principle of beneficence (that one ought to do good) leads to the prescriptions that one ought to be alert to possible negative consequences and one ought to avoid actions that could cause harm.

- “Precautionary Prevention” is a type of prevention public health practitioners generally have not practiced. Although public health workers may be interested in preventive actions even when they do not understand the causal mechanisms involved, they usually advocate a preventive action only when they can demonstrate that a problem exists and know that the intervention will work. Prevention is precautionary when action is taken to reduce a possible risk before that risk is proven or the causal mechanisms are known.
- Recent work on the precautionary principle that may interest the California EMF Program’s stakeholders includes a project of the Center for Sustainable Production at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell that looks at the implications of precautionary prevention for US environmental and occupational regulations. Joel Tickner and David Kriebel (David_Kriebel@uml.edu) have interesting work in this direction. In addition, David Gee at the European Environment Agency has written a book entitled “Late Lessons from Early Warnings: The Precautionary Principle 1898-1998.” It describes a series of case histories in which early warnings of possible risks were ignored, resulting in health consequences. He looks for common patterns of thought and behavior that led people to ignore evidence of a risk in these cases. Case histories include asbestos and mad cow disease, among others (see www.eea.eu.int). The author invited several industry groups to submit case studies of false alarms, but after discussion, none were submitted.

Research Unit Progress:

Project Updates

EMF Miscarriage Studies

Revision of the manuscript describing the DHS EMF miscarriage study has been completed. The manuscript is now under editorial consideration for publication in the journal "Epidemiology". It is expected to be published in November 2001 as a companion paper to the Kaiser EMF miscarriage study, which has already been accepted for publication in the same journal.

School Policy Analysis Project

Revisions in response to the peer reviewers have taken longer than expected due to other demands on Keith Florig's time. We continue to urge Dr. Florig to complete the draft as soon as possible.

Risk Evaluation

Until there is an opportunity to brief the CPUC, the EMF Risk Evaluation (Public Comment Draft #3) will not be released for public comment. As of this time, no date for such a briefing has been set.

Policy Integration

Like the Risk Evaluation, the draft of the Policy Options Summary will not be released for public comment until there is an opportunity to brief the CPUC. There has been no date set for such a briefing.

Power Grid/Land Use Policy Analysis

This project is now complete and the final report has been delivered to the Program. It will be sent out to the core stakeholders at the end of June. It will also be available from City Copy Center (510-763-0193) and posted on our web site. The SAC will be given an opportunity to comment on the report and have these comments attached to the report when it is delivered to the CPUC.

and the California Department of Health Services

Education and Technical Assistance Unit Progress

Public Response Discontinued

As of May 31, 2001, the California EMF Program no longer answers individual questions from members of the public. Instead, we hope that people with questions about EMF and health will take advantage of the fact sheets and other information that are available on our web site, which is currently at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/deodc/ehib/emf>. Future fact sheets (including one answering the questions that we receive most frequently: EMF in residential environments) will be posted on our site as they become available. People who do not have Internet access can request fact sheets on EMF by calling the Program at (510) 622-4430 and leaving a voicemail message, or by faxing their requests to the Program at (510) 622-4505.

For the last several years the California Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF) Program's Education Unit has answered hundreds of questions from members of the public about the possible health risks of power frequency electric and magnetic fields. As announced in our September/October 2000 Newsletter, we have been phasing out our public response activities over the past several months. Unfortunately, due to the loss of Education Unit staff, we are no longer able to continue answering individual questions. We regret that it is no longer possible for us to maintain our past level of public response.

Staff Departures

From the Health Educator

In the years since I became the Health Educator for the California EMF Program, I have enjoyed working with this Program's stakeholders and staff. Now that the Program is nearing its conclusion, however, it is time for me to move on. I have

accepted a job as a Public Utilities Regulatory Analyst with the Office of Ratepayer Advocates at the California Public Utilities Commission, where I expect to begin work this July. My last day working at the California EMF Program will be Friday, June 22, 2001. My interest in the Program's progress will not end when I leave, and I will continue to follow future developments with great interest. I hope that I was able to make a positive contribution to the Program during my time here, and I also hope that you enjoyed working with me as I valued working with all of you.

Sincerely,
Jessica Hecht

From the Health Education Assistant

By the time you receive this newsletter, I will have already left the EMF Program and started my new job as Program Associate for the Friends of Recreation and Parks, San Francisco. I am sad to be ending my position as the Health Education Assistant for the Program. I have learned a lot during this past year that I've been here. Most importantly, I have seen how many people are genuinely dedicated to finding out all they can about EMF issues and passing this information along. I am glad I had the chance to work with and meet many of these dedicated people.

Regards,
Kim Merin

Education Unit Updates

Fact Sheets

Residential Fact Sheet

The *Frequently Asked Questions about EMF in Residences* fact sheet is completed and undergoing review by the California Department of Health Services leadership. We hope to be able to make this publicly available on our web site and in hard copy in the near future.

EMF in Schools Fact Sheet

The EMF in Schools Fact Sheet is still in the DHS director's office awaiting release approval.

Non-Technical Summaries

Power Grid Policy Project Non-Technical Summary

The Health Educator has finally received a copy of this project's final technical executive summary, and is now working on a draft of a less technical summary of the project.

School Policy Project Non-Technical Summary

The Health Education Assistant has continued to work on the non-technical summary of the School Policy Project. However, until the actual School Policy Project document is finalized, the non-technical summary will not be completed.

School Exposure Assessment and Risk Evaluation Guidelines Non-Technical Summaries

The School Exposure Assessment and Risk Evaluation Guidelines non-technical summaries are still in the DHS director's office waiting for release approval.

Other Activities and Products

Web site

There has been much effort spent on the web site in the past two months. First, the design of some of our web pages have been altered so they are more user-friendly. Now, rather than having to scroll through the pages to find the document you are looking for, the right-hand side of the screen lists all of the projects/documents listed on that particular web page. You can then click on the item you want from the list on the right-hand column, and you will be taken to that item on the web page. This change makes our web site much easier to navigate, particularly for those not familiar with the program's organization.

We have moved our web site onto the DHS server. Our new web address is <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/deodc/ehib/emf>. Our old address will continue to work, and soon we will be re-directing people from our old address to our new one, so as to have only one address. There will be no significant changes associated with this web site move. However, being on the DHS server will ensure that our web site is maintained after the Program ends.

The Health Education Assistant has continued to re-design the EMF Program's web site for when it will have to conform to the new eGovernment standards. These standards, though not yet finalized, will require all state programs to adhere to certain templates for their web site. It is not anticipated that these new standards will actually be implemented until much further in the future.

EMF Program Glossary

An EMF Program Glossary has been completed. This glossary, which includes definitions of epidemiology, statistics, and physics terms found in our various documents, can be accessed on our web site at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/deodc/ehib/emf/glossary.html>. We hope that the Glossary will help people better understand our documents, since it will provide them with definitions of words that can be hard to understand for those not accustomed to EMF-related issues.

DHS Notebook

A collection of the EMF Program's important past documents from 1994-2000 has been compiled and bound for internal use by the Department of Health Services. Consisting of past agendas, minutes, mailing tables of contents, and newsletters, this Notebook will serve as a record of the EMF Program once the Program ceases to exist. At the end of the Program documents from 2001 will be added to the notebook, which will be re-bound at that time.

Response to Public Questions

The Education Unit began phasing out public response activities earlier this year, and consequently received fewer telephone calls than usual over the last two months. Education Unit staff continued to respond to the telephone calls and e-mailed questions that we received over this period but, as announced above, we are no longer taking individual questions.

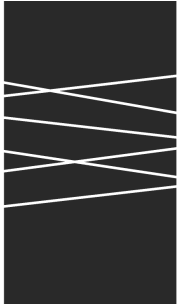
SAC Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the April 25, 2001 SAC meeting are now complete. They will be sent out in the next EMF Program mailing.

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